Obituary

By Antonio Palacios

Emilio Sanz de Soto died last year, on November 23th. The headline of the obituary in El País was “A man of letters and cinema”. But Sanz wasn’t a man of letters; he just published a few reviews about painting, music, cinema, Tangiers and the Bowles. Although two important publishers wanted his memoirs, he refused to write down his life.

“I searched for people to help me write the thing… to poor results. When I talk about the dreamland quality of Tangiers, consequence of the twisted streets and the illogical paths, some people transcribe it like it was a De Chirico painting. Besides, not writing useless books is an act of mercy.” To me, these words unravelled a little mystery.

Gómez Font, a friend of mine who happened to know Sanz, rang me four years ago. “Be there after six in the afternoon… maybe you’ll be the chosen one… he needs the money, you know, he’s sick…”

Sanz agreed to test me. He gave me some briefcases full of photos, clippings, manuscripts… it was a memorial in collage form. In one of the photos he was with Barbara Hutton, both masked. “That was in Paris, May 68, at a party. Picasso sent his chauffeur to pick me up. Some gave us dirty looks; they didn’t know that the Mercedes was owned by the man who painted Guernica”.

Hutton also organized an exhibition in a little library of Tangiers, Des Colonnes, for José Hernandez. There showed up Francis Bacon, Ahmed Yacoubi, Gregory Corso, Gingsberg, Haro Ybars, Paul and Jane Bowles…

“Then we headed for the Cafe Claridge, to meet Burroughs. He had the custom of dying in the morning, being revived by Madame Claude, his landlady, scoring all day and writing all night. Burroughs told me that the only

ghost that appears in Spanish literature is the Holy Ghost. To prove that he was wrong, I went back to the library and gave him a french copy of Los Sueños, by Quevedo. He devoured it in silence, right there".

"Paul loved Ybars... He told him that if you go to Hafa at dawn, you can meet a ghost. The wet wind kisses your lips and the warm sun seems to touch you. Ybars rushed immediately to the beach followed by Jane. She had a broken mirror in her purse and Ybars convinced her to throw the mirror to the sea to avoid bad luck. Of course, Ybars swore that he had seen the ghost. Paul made it all as an experiment, to demonstrate the power of words".

After two days of work, Sanz didn't call me back and nobody wrote the curious book I had pictured in my head. I sent him a draft recollecting the memories that he shared with me, in which I compared Tangiers with a De Chirico painting. Yes, not writing useless books is an act of mercy, but most of us are ruthless.

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By **Antonio Palacios** | Aug 05,2008 22:40:03

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Suzanne Duvall **Says:**
May 18th,2009 04:54:07

Emilio was my professor of surrealismo. I will never forget him. I met him in 1990 in Madrid.

Adam **Says:**
Aug 8th,2008 15:43:31

The movement from ghost to ghost in paragraphs six and seven works like a dream. There is something really ethereal about the piece. Yeah and, as Daniel says, fab final line.

Daniel Stacey (Ed) **Says:**
Aug 6th,2008 18:49:05

killer closing line Antonio

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